



Below is a script just like the ones used in the studio to record the voices of the real Adventures in Odyssey actors! There are several scenes in this script that never made it to broadcast. Can you tell which ones they are?

You can read this script or act it out with your friends. If you perform it for an audience, just make sure you don't change it or collect any money for it. And if you want to hear how the finished show sounds, this episode is included in Album #15, **A Place of Wonder**.

A CLASS ACT

By Paul McCusker
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SCENE 1.

[WE BEGIN WITH R. EDWIN BLACKGAARD ON STAGE -- PERFORMING FOR AN APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE.]

R. EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(WITH GREAT FLAIR) To be or not to be ...

[THE CROWD APPLAUDS]

R. EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
... That is the question ...

[THE CROWD GROWS MORE ENTHUSIASTIC]

R. EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
... Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer ...

[THE CROWD BECOMES WILD IN THEIR APPLAUSE]

R. EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
... the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune ...

[THE CROWD IS APPROACHING A POINT OF HYSTERIA]

R. EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
... Or to take arms against a sea of troubles ...

[THE CROWD IS NOW OUT OF CONTROL.]

R. EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Thank you, thank you. No, really. Thank you, thank you.

[THE CROWD IS SUDDENLY CUT-OFF BY THE VOICE OF BLACKGAARD'S ASSISTANT.]

SHAKESPEARE:

(AS IF THEY WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF A
CONVERSATION) I beg your pardon, Mr. Blackgaard?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

What?

SHAKESPEARE:

I believe you drifted into a rather vivid daydream.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Did I? (REALIZING IT WAS TRUE, DISAPPOINTED)
Oh, I did. Only a daydream. It was a glorious moment.
I was on stage again, basking in the glow of an
enthusiastic audience. (UNHAPPILY) Nothing like my
experience here in Odyssey. What have I done wrong,
Shakespeare?

SHAKESPEARE:

Wrong, sir?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

We can't get the people to come to the good shows we
put on -- and when they do come, it's to see yet another
dinner-theatre production of Oklahoma --

SHAKESPEARE:

We must perform the crowd-pleasers to make money,
sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I know, I know -- but did we have to set it in Alaska?

SHAKESPEARE:

You'll remember that by setting Oklahoma in Alaska,
we were able to use those costumes from our
production of The Call Of The Wild.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

What next, Shakespeare? A production of South
Pacific in our costumes from Romeo and Juliet?

SHAKESPEARE:

It's to save money, sir. We're barely surviving as it is.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Why? Why? Oh, Shakespeare, where are Odyssey's

believers in the great works of theatre?

SHAKESPEARE:
Home watching Gilligan's Island re-runs, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
It's terrible ...

SHAKESPEARE:
And if it doesn't improve, I'm afraid we'll go out of business.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
What do I have to do?

SHAKESPEARE:
Well, sir, there is an option -- one that arrived in the mail this morning.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
I'm not entering another one of those magazine contests, Shakespeare. I've spent a fortune in postage.

SHAKESPEARE:
No, sir. If you'll be so kind as to take a look at this rather anonymous letter. (HANDS HIM THE LETTER)

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Anonymous? Not another threat.

SHAKESPEARE:
No, sir. You'll see that it is an anonymous letter offering you a generous sum of money to teach a class in acting.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
What?

SHAKESPEARE:
The only stipulation is that you don't exclude anyone who wants to attend.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Teach acting in Odyssey? Is this what's it's come to, Shakespeare? To waste my time and talents listening to country folk butcher lines from *Our Town* and *Arsenic and Old Lace* and (GASP, HORROR) *The Importance of Being Earnest*?

SHAKESPEARE:
Yes, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I'd rather die.

SHAKESPEARE:

Fair enough, sir. I'll just make us some tea while we wait for the bank to repossess all our furniture.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Wait, wait ... Shakespeare ...

SHAKESPEARE:

Sir?

ROBYN:

(SIGHS) Of course you're right. There's no point in looking a gift horse in the mouth -- even if it needs dental work. It's a matter of survival.

SHAKESPEARE:

Then -- ?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Yes, Shakespeare -- tell the good people of Odyssey that Edwin Blackgaard is going to teach them how to act!

[DRAMATIC MUSIC TAKES US TO...]

[FIRST BREAK]

SCENE 2.

[WHIT'S END. THE WORD IS GETTING AROUND TO THE GANG ABOUT BLACKGAARD'S FREE ACTING CLASS.]

WHIT:

Well, what do you think? Jack?

JACK:

Count me in, Mr. Whittaker! I'd love to study with Mr. Blackgaard.

WHIT:

Connie?

CONNIE:

I don't know ... he still makes me uneasy.

WHIT:

I thought we settled that.

CONNIE:

Well ...

WHIT:

Connie, Edwin Blackgaard has nothing to do with his brother. Besides, I happen to know that Dr. Blackgaard is still overseas.

CONNIE:

Uh huh ...

WHIT:

I t'd help you with your work in the Little Theatre.

CONNIE:

That's true.

EUGENE:

I, for one, would be most gratified to expand my Thespian abilities with Mr. Blackgaard. I thought it was most imaginative of him to do a production of Oklahoma set in Alaska. It's the mark of a true genius to use symbolism in that way.

WHIT:

That must be a yes.

EUGENE:

Yes, it is a "yes" -- er, affirmative.

WHIT:

How about you, Charles?

CHARLES:

Who -- me?

WHIT:

Of course you. Didn't you tell me just the other day that you wished you could act?

CHARLES:

Yeah, but that was just me talking. I do that a lot.

CONNIE:

What do you mean? You helped out with the Kid's Radio program and you were great. If I'm going to take Blackgaard's class, then you have to, too.

CHARLES:

I do?

CONNIE:

Yes.

CHARLES:

Then I guess I'll take the class.

JACK:

What about you, Mr. Whittaker? Are you gonna take the class?

WHIT:

I'd really like to, Jack, but I'm a little over-committed right now. You can tell me how it goes and maybe I'll pick up a few pointers.

JACK:

Okay.

WHIT:

When does the class begin?

JACK:

Thursday evening.

[BRIDGE TO:]

SCENE 3.

[BLACKGAARD'S PLACE. THE FIRST CLASS. THE SCENE BEGINS WITH THE PERPLEXING SOUND OF THE CLASS DOING MOUTH EXERCISES: "BRRRRR"S AND "AH-AH-AH-AH" AND "HMMMMM"S. IN ATTENDANCE ARE: JACK, CONNIE, EUGENE AND CHARLES -- ALONG WITH SHANNON (FROM COURAGE TO STAND) BLACKGAARD IS GOING ABOUT THIS CLASS WITH FEIGNED PLEASANTRY THROUGH CLENCHED TEETH.]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Very good, class. Those mouth exercises will help you to speak clearly and project your voice. Your acting will be of no use if your words are not as sweet whispers in the back row of the balcony.

CHARLES:

Why will we be whispering in the back row of the balcony, Mr. Blackgaard? Shouldn't we be on stage?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

A figure of speech, Charles. Speak so you'll be heard.

CHARLES:

(MUMBLES) Yes, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

What?

CHARLES:
(LOUDER) Yes, sir.

SHANNON:
I always speak clearly, Mr. Blackgaard. Being a cheerleader has taught me the importance of that.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Very good, Shannon. Now --

SHANNON:
And when I played the part of Katie Crabapple in my second grade production of --

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Yes, Shannon. We're all confident in your ability to talk loudly. Now, class, our next exercise will be to help you develop another important tool of acting: the act of becoming.

CONNIE:
Becoming what?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Precisely the question that must be asked. Becoming what? Your character, of course. Since this is our first class together, we shall begin with the basics. For the next few minutes, I'd like you to think of -- then become -- an inanimate object.

JACK:
A what?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Become something that doesn't move or talk -- a rock or a tree.

CHARLES:
Is that why we'll have to whisper to the back row?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
No, Charles.

EUGENE:
Pardon me, Mr. Blackgaard, but technically speaking, a tree isn't inanimate. It moves as it grows and spreads its appendages.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I stand corrected. I want you to become things -- that's all. Things. Since you're so interested in trees, Eugene. Why don't you become one?

EUGENE:
A tree? Er, precisely what kind of tree were you thinking: deciduous, coniferous, perhaps a -- ?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Be a tree, Eugene. A tree blowing gently in the wind.

EUGENE:
Of course. But what is my motivation? Is the tree blowing gently because it is old and beaten by decades of weather or is it --

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Forget the wind. You're standing perfectly still --

EUGENE:
But why would -- ?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
With your bark tightly covering your mouth.

EUGENE:
(THROUGH TIGHT LIPS) Yes, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Now, unless there are other questions ... become something!

[THERE IS A RUSTLE AS THE CLASS TRIES TO DECIDE, THEN TAKE THEIR POSITIONS. A BRIEF NOTE OF "TIME PASSAGE" MUSIC IS HEARD, THEN:]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(CLAPS HIS HANDS) Very good, class. I think that's all for today. Jack -- your imitation of a house with a two-car garage having a pizza delivered was most ... imaginative. Connie, I appreciated your attempt at being a broken milkshake dispenser. Charles, your large dirt clod was unforgettable. Shannon --

SHANNON:
Yes, sir?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Your appearance as a rose pedal was without compare.

SHANNON:
Thank you. You know, I played an entire rose bush in

my first grade prod --

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Yes, thank you.

EUGENE:
(CLEARS THROAT) And what about me, sir?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Eugene. Yes. Your tree. The words escape me.

EUGENE:
Thank you.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Well, then, I suppose this is as good a time as any to announce that the ultimate goal of this class -- apart from making you better actors -- is to put together a production of some sort to be performed for the public.

[AUDIBLE AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES FROM THE CLASS.]

CHARLES:
You mean, like, get up in front of people and perform?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Of course. A recital, if you will.

CONNIE:
What will we be performing?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
I haven't decided yet. I'll know by our next class. All right? I see by the gaggle of parents gathering at the door that we're over our time. Dismissed!

[SHUFFLING SOUNDS, CASUAL CONVERSATION, ETC., AS THE CLASS GATHERS THEIR THINGS TO GO. THE WAITING PARENTS ENTER. CHARLES' MOTHER GO TO HIM, AS DOES SHANNON'S FATHER -- RICHARD EVERETT.]

MAUREEN THOMPSON:
Charles! How is it, son?

CHARLES:
Okay, I guess. Where's Dad?

MAUREEN THOMPSON:
Working late at the factory. Mr. Blackgaard?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Yes?

MAUREEN THOMPSON:
I'm Maureen Thompson, Charles' Mom. Thank you very much for allowing him in your class.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
It was my ... pleasure. And I have no doubt that when Charles gets up on stage, people will say to themselves ... "Now that's Charles!"

MAUREEN THOMPSON:
Do you think so? Oh, isn't that exciting, Charles?

CHARLES:
I guess.

MAUREEN THOMPSON:
Well, it's nice to meet you.

RI CHARD EVERETT:
(APPROACHING) Blackgaard!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Yes?

RI CHARD EVERETT:
Richard Everett here. Shannon's my daughter. How did my little pumpkin do?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Pumpkin? I thought she was trying to be a rose.

RI CHARD EVERETT:
What?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Nothing.

RI CHARD EVERETT:
Talented little gal, isn't she? She'll be a star in no time at all, I'm sure.

SHANNON:
Daddy! I'll take a little time.

RI CHARD EVERETT:
Not with my baby. Tell you what, Sugarplum, you do a good job in this class -- make your ol' Dad proud -- and there might be a small present at the end of it for you.

SHANNON:

Daddy!

RI CHARD EVERETT:

Perhaps that pool you wanted in the back yard?

SHANNON:

Olympic size?

RI CHARD EVERETT:

Don't push it.

SHANNON:

Oh, thank you, Daddy!

[EVERETT'S PAGER GOES OFF.]

RI CHARD EVERETT:

Oh, you'll have to excuse us. I'm being paged. (TO SHANNON) Come on, Shannon, I can make the call from the car. (THEY GO)

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

(AS THEY GO) Tah-tah.

JACK:

Mr. Blackgaard?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Yes, Jack?

JACK:

I have to go deliver some pizzas, but I wanted to thank you for teaching this class.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I'm sure it'll be an experience for all of us.

JACK:

I hope so! See ya later!

[CONNIE AND EUGENE APPROACH]

EUGENE:

Mr. Blackgaard, before I go I'd like to express my surprise that this class was as enjoyable as it was.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Er, thanks.

CONNIE:

Yeah -- me, too. I know when you first came to town that I said you crawled out from under a rock and should be tarred, feathered and driven from town on a rail, but I think my opinion is changing.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
So glad to hear it.

CONNIE:
See ya next time.

EUGENE:
Farewell.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(CHUCKLES PLEASANTLY) Goodbye ... goodbye ...

[HE CLOSES THE DOOR AFTER THEM]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(CHUCKLE TURNS INTO A GROWL INTO A ROAR)
Shakespeare!

[MUSIC BRIDGES TO THE NEXT SCENE]

SCENE 4.
[BLACKGAARD'S OFFICE. A LITTLE LATER.]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
What am I going to do, Shakespeare? It was horrible.
I've scraped more talent out from under my fingernail than I'll ever get from that class.

SHAKESPEARE:
Patience, sir, patience. Have some lemonade. (HANDS HIM THE GLASS)

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(TAKING IT) Patience! You weren't there! You didn't spend a half-hour arguing with Eugene whether the tree he was pretending to be should have blossoms or not!

SHAKESPEARE:
Remember the anonymous donor, sir-- the money.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Yes, yes -- of course. Remember the money. Thank you for so brutally reminding me.

SHAKESPEARE:

It's my duty, sir.

[MISS MINION KNOCKS GENTLY, THEN ENTERS]

MISS MINION:

Mr. Blackgaard?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Come in, Miss Minion.

MISS MINION:

(ENTERING) I'm sorry to bother you, sir, but this envelope was left on my desk.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Who is it from?

MISS MINION:

I have no idea. Someone apparently left it when I was away from my desk.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Hand it to Shakespeare please. And thank you.

MISS MINION:

You're welcome, sir.

SHAKESPEARE:

It looks like another anonymous note. (BEGINS TO OPEN IT)

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Well? What is it?

SHAKESPEARE:

(READING) "Dear Mr. Blackgaard ... I wanted to thank you again for teaching the class. It went very well. Keep up the good work. Signed, your secret friend." It looks like the same handwriting as the original anonymous note.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Isn't that interesting. So our secret sponsor is actually in the class.

SHAKESPEARE:

Or connected with someone in the class.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Who might it be? I don't know them well enough to guess. They all seem too poor to give me that kind of

money.

SHAKESPEARE:

It could be the parents of one of your students.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

True. It's a mystery, Shakespeare -- and you know how mysteries make me feel.

SHAKESPEARE:

Nervous and sweaty?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Exactly. This means I'm going to have to be nice to everyone in the class.

SHAKESPEARE:

I beg your pardon?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Until I can figure out who is giving me the money! I can't risk offending our secret friend. (GROANS) I nearly got lock-jaw trying to be nice for this first class -- I didn't know I would have to continue.

SHAKESPEARE:

Just remember, sir, it's for the good of our theatre.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Yes ... the good of our theatre.

[MUSIC TAKES US TO ...]

SCENE 5.

[A FEW DAYS LATER. ANOTHER CLASS IS FINISHING UP.]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

All right, class. Let's begin.

CONNIE:

Mr. Blackgaard ...

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Yes, Connie.

CONNIE:

Have you decided what we'll be doing for our end-of-class performance?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

No. I'm still thinking about it.

CONNIE:
I'd like to make a suggestion.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Would you?

CONNIE:
Yes. I -- uh -- have a little something I wrote.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
You're a playwright, are you?

CONNIE:
Yeah, sort of. Whit has been encouraging me. Anyway, it's a play about a group of people trapped on a desert island.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
A desert island. How delightful. (INTENDING TO SLAM THE IDEA) Well, to be perfectly honest, I --

SHAKESPEARE:
(CLEARS THROAT) Mr. Blackgaard.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
What is it, Shakespeare? I'm busy.

SHAKESPEARE:
A word, Mr. Blackgaard. Now?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(IMPATIENTLY) Yes, yes. (CLOSER TO SHAKESPEARE, LOW) What is it?

SHAKESPEARE:
(LOW) Remember, Mr. Blackgaard -- our secret friend?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
What about it?

SHAKESPEARE:
Is it wise to offend any one in the class? Connie, for example?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
You mean, do her play? But I saw one of her plays at the Little Theatre and it was awful.

SHAKESPEARE:
For the good of the theatre, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(SIGHS) Right. (LOUDLY, TO CONNIE) As I was saying, Connie. To be honest, I think it's a brilliant suggestion. We'll perform your play.

CONNIE:
Wow! Thanks! Here it is. (HANDS IT TO HIM)

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Thank you. I'll read it directly after class.

JACK:
Mr. Blackgaard? -- I was thinking about this show, too, and ... well ...

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
There's something you'd like to do, Jack.

JACK:
Yeah! I'd really like to play a tough detective-type. I'm even trying to grow a moustache. See?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(SMOOTHLY SARCASTIC) Really! How exciting. We'll all get out our magnifying glasses and have a look.

SHAKESPEARE:
Mr. Blackgaard.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(BEAT, REALIZING AGAIN) I think it's a wonderful idea. A detective.

EUGENE:
Ahem. If we're allowed to put in suggestions for our "big performance" -- as it were -- then I have one or two thoughts about characters which might suit my particular gifts.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
You want to play a particular kind of turnip, Eugene?

EUGENE:
(CHUCKLES) Oh no, no. I was thinking of a medieval troubadour type -- that way I might be able to incorporate my (CLEARS THROAT) ukelele, perhaps?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(HE GOES THROUGH THE CONTORTIONS OF TRYING TO KEEP CONTROL) Yo -- you -- uk -- You're

ukelele? Yes. Perfect for a play about a desert island.
You could serenade Jack's detective! And what about
you, Shannon? You could be the starlet who drifted
onto Connie's desert island after her Olympic-sized
yacht sank!

SHANNON:
(OVERJOYED) Could I?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
And Charles!

CHARLES:
Me?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
What would you like to be?

CHARLES:
Well, I ... I think I'd like to be a superhero.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
A superhero! Of course! Why didn't I think of it?
You can rescue everyone from the desert island. What
a wonderful idea! I can't wait to put this on stage for
all to see! I'll clinch my reputation in this town for
high-quality theatre!

CONNIE:
Are you being serious, Mr. Blackgaard?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Serious, Connie? I'm being more than serious. I'm
being nice. Aren't I, Shakespeare?

SHAKESPEARE:
Yes, sir. Very nice.

[MUSIC TAKES US TO...]

SCENE 6.
[WHIT'S END. MUCH LATER.]

WHIT:
Now, wait a minute, Connie. Edwin Blackgaard wants
to produce your play about the desert island?

CONNIE:
Yeah! Why're you acting so surprised?

WHIT:

I guess you've rewritten it since the last time I read it.

CONNIE:
No ... I haven't touched a word.

WHIT:
Really?

CONNIE:
Whit! What's wrong?

WHIT:
Connie, you remember what I said when I read your play.

CONNIE:
You didn't like it.

WHIT:
It's not that I didn't like it -- it's that it wasn't a good play. Your characters were weak, your dialogue was cliched, and you didn't have much of a story.

CONNIE:
Yeah, but besides that.

WHIT:
If you haven't rewritten it, then why in the world would Blackgaard want to produce it?

CONNIE:
(COYLY) Maybe he has insight that you don't have.

WHIT:
Maybe.

CONNIE:
I have to do some re-writing anyway.

WHIT:
That's good.

CONNIE:
To put in the detective, the starlet, Eugene's ukelele and ... oh yeah, a super-hero.

WHIT:
On the desert island?

CONNIE:
Uh huh. Those were the class' ideas. Jack's even

growing a moustache.

WHIT:
Oh, I get it. This is some sort of exercise.

CONNIE:
No! We're going to put it together and perform it for
Odyssey!

WHIT:
And Blackgaard said yes.

CONNIE:
Sure! Why not? (AS A JAB) Obviously he knows talent
when he sees it.

WHIT:
I guess he does -- but I'd like to know where he sees it
in this idea.

[MUSIC TAKES US TO...]

SCENE 7.
[ANOTHER SLAMMING DOOR AS BLACKGAARD ENTERS HIS OFFICE.]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Shakespeare!

SHAKESPEARE:
The end of another rehearsal, sir?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
What else? I'm at the end of my rope. Six weeks of
painful rehearsal -- two weeks before our performance
and -- have you seen what's going on in there?

SHAKESPEARE:
Not on purpose, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
I'll be ruined. My reputation, my career, my life ...

SHAKESPEARE:
Is it so bad?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Shakespeare, it's a play about a weedy computer
hacker with an untuned ukelele, a detective with a
pathetic moustache, a girl who is more of a hamlet than
a starlet -- note the italics -- and a chubby little kid
whose belly-button keeps falling out of his super-hero

costume all stranded on a desert island. Is this theatre? Is this why I'm here? I don't know how long I'll be able to hold out.

[MISS MINION KNOCKS AND ENTERS.]

MISS MINION:

Mr. Blackgaard?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

What is it, Miss Minion? Can't you see I'm having an overdramatic fit?

MISS MINION:

John Whittaker is here to see you, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Whit? No! I'd be humiliated to see him!

WHIT:

(ENTERING) Then see him anyway.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Whit! (Thank you, Miss Minion.)

[SHE RETREATS]

SHAKESPEARE:

Lemonade, sir?

WHIT:

Yes, please. How are you, Edwin?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

You must know how I am.

WHIT:

I've been hearing from Connie. She seems to think everything's going well.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I'm sure she does.

WHIT:

I know it's none of my business, but ... would you care to let me in on the joke?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

It's no joke, Whit.

WHIT:

Then what's going on?

SHAKESPEARE:

Your lemonades.

WHIT &

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Thank you.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

We're broke, Whit. We're on the verge of going out of business. But someone promised us a lot of money to do this class and we think it's someone connected with the class, but we don't know who, so --

WHIT:

So you don't want to offend anyone -- just in case -- and that's why you're doing this program.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Exactly.

WHIT:

That certainly explains a lot. I was getting a little worried about your taste in drama, Edwin. I'm glad to know it's only a problem with judgment.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Judgment?

WHIT:

Well, if you want my humble opinion...

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Yes, yes!

WHIT:

You're put yourself in an impossible position.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I know, I know!

WHIT:

Not only are you trying to please everyone in the entire class, but you've let money become the center of your thinking.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Don't you think I know that? Don't you think I feel completely helpless? But we're going broke. I had to do something!

WHIT:

But is this the best thing to do? I'm sure whoever gave you the money wanted you to be less concerned about offending your students than to guide and instruct them so they'll be good at acting.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

And if they aren't very good?

WHIT:

Then it's better to be truthful and help them understand that. You can turn a negative into a positive by showing them what they can do well.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

That's all very fine and reasonable, but it's not practical.

WHIT:

It isn't?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I've dealt with classes like this before. The students and their parents get very nasty if you say they're anything less than wonderful.

SHAKESPEARE:

You'll remember that incident in Waldorf, Maryland, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Oh, yes! And as I said, Whit, my hands are tied!
(BEAT, SUDDENLY THINKING) Unless ...

WHIT:

Unless?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

We can figure out who's giving us the money! Then we can forget the rest!

WHIT:

You can't do that, Edwin! What about their talents ... their feelings?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

That's show biz!

[MUSIC TAKES US TO...]

[BREAK]

SCENE 8.

[LATE NIGHT. BLACKGAARD POUNDS ON SHAKESPEARE'S BEDROOM DOOR, THEN BURSTS IN.]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Shakespeare! Shakespeare! Wake up!

SHAKESPEARE:
Sir? What time is it?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
What does the time matter?

SHAKESPEARE:
Trouble sleeping again? I'll fix you some warm milk.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Forget the warm milk. I've figured out who our
mysterious friend is!

SHAKESPEARE:
You have, sir? Well done! (ROLLS OVER) Goodnight.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Listen to me, Shakespeare. It could only be one
person. Think about it! Connie is a poor high school
student who works at Whit's End. Eugene is a poor
whatever-he-is who also works at Whit's End. Jack's
just a pizza delivery boy who can barely afford to
grow a moustache. I met Charles' mother and she
mentioned that his father works at a factory -- so
there can't be much money in that family. Which leaves
us with Shannon -- and her Olympic-sized father with a
car-phone and expensive dialogue! It's her,
Shakespeare!

SHAKESPEARE:
What does this mean, sir?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
It means I'm off the hook from having to cater to
Connie's bad play, Eugene's ukelele, Jack's bad Bogart
and Charles' belly-button! I'm free!

[MUSIC TAKES US TO ...]

SCENE 9.

[ANOTHER REHEARSAL. BLACKGAARD BEGINS WITH AN ANNOUNCEMENT.]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Class ... now, class. I have an important announcement to make. Due to circumstances beyond our control, we're going to make some immediate changes in our program. First, we're trashing Connie's script.

CONNIE:

What?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I've trained dogs with better material, Connie. Eugene --

EUGENE:

Yes, sir?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

I would recommend that you find a very large sledgehammer and destroy your ukelele with it.

EUGENE:

I beg your pardon?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

It's out of the show. Jack?

JACK:

Yeah?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Take a pair of tweezers and pluck those three hairs you call a moustache.

JACK:

Awww ...

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Charles?

CHARLES:

Y-y-y-es?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Turn in your cape. Your super-hero days are over.
(BEAT) Now, I've written my own play that I think will show off your individual talents even better.
Shakespeare gave you the new scripts as you came in.

CONNIE:

That's what these are? But ... according to the description, I'm a whiney teen-ager who bosses everyone around and couldn't write my way out of a

paper bag!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Is that what it says?

CONNIE:
Yes!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
I'm sorry. That should be "wet paper bag."

EUGENE:
What is this? I'm a techno-geek who wants to be a musician but doesn't have the talent?

JACK:
And I'm ... Jack-The-Pizza-Delivering-Donkey?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
It's a costume drama.

CHARLES:
I'm a tree.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
The less said about that the better.

SHANNON:
Wait a minute ... what about me?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
Shannon? You are the star!

CONNIE, EUGENE, JACK & CHARLES:
What?!?!?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(SHRUGS) That's show biz.

[MUSIC TAKES US TO...]

SCENE 10.
[PERFORMANCE NIGHT. PRIOR TO THE CURTAIN RISING.]

CONNIE:
Eugene ... what are you doing?

EUGENE:
Peeking to see how many people are in the audience.

CONNIE:

Well?

EUGENE:
Approximately 178, not including your mother and Whit
-- who are waiting near the back door for a quick exit.

CONNIE:
Terrific. Why am I doing this? Huh? Playing a whiney
teenager. Just answer me that.

EUGENE:
Because you're so good at the part?

CONNIE:
Better that than a talentless computer hacker.

EUGENE:
Sticks and stones, Ms. Kendall.

[CHARLES -- IN A TREE COSTUME -- BUMPS INTO EUGENE.]

EUGENE:
Ouch!

CHARLES:
Sorry! I can't see in this tree costume!

CONNIE:
Where's Jack? Isn't he supposed to be guiding you
around?

JACK:
I'm right here. I'm having a hard time getting my
donkey tail on.

EUGENE:
Allow me ... (STARTS TO PIN IT ON)

JACK:
Thanks. (GETS STABBED) Ouch!

EUGENE:
Pardon me.

[BLACKGAARD ENTERS WITH SHANNON AND HER FATHER.]

R. EDWIN BLACKGAARD:
(ENTERING) Make way, make way ... our star is born!

CONNIE:
Oh, brother.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Shannon ... take your place center stage. The rest of you, take your positions ... the show is about to start. Mr. Everett, I've reserved seats for your front and center.

RICHARD EVERETT:

Thank you, Blackgaard. I knew investing my money in this class was a good idea.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Ah -- so it was you. I never would've guessed.

RICHARD EVERETT:

I try to be discrete about where I donate my money. (CALLING TO SHANNON) Good luck, pumpkin.

SHANNON:

Thank you, Daddy!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

If you'll take your seat, Mr. Everett, we'll start the show.

RICHARD EVERETT:

I can't wait.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Neither can I. (CALLS TO SHAKESPEARE)
Shakespeare! The curtain!

SHAKESPEARE:

Yes, sir!

[THE MUSIC TAKES US TO ...]

SCENE 11.

[AFTER THE SHOW. BLACKGAARD IS BACK STAGE.]

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Well, Shakespeare, it's finally over.

SHAKESPEARE:

Yes, sir.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

(POSITIVELY) The performance was an utter disaster. Connie and Eugene stomped around the stage like a couple of angry bulls, Jack-The-Donkey knocked Charles-The-Tree over three times and Shannon

butchered her way through all the lines she could remember -- which weren't very many. But she was the star of the show.

SHAKESPEARE:

I hope so, sir.

WHIT:

(APPROACHING) Edwin!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Ah, Whit. Good of you to come.

WHIT:

Thank you. I just wanted to slip back to congratulate you.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

How kind.

WHIT:

You completely compromised your integrity and honesty by showing favoritism for the sake of money.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Thank you, thank you. But Shannon was a star. Her parents must be very pleased with us.

RI CHARD EVERETT:

(APPROACHING) Blackgaard!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

And here's our secret donor now. (TO SHAKESPEARE)
Get the bank deposit slip ready, Shakespeare.

RI CHARD EVERETT:

Blackgaard!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Yes, Mr. Everett?

RI CHARD EVERETT:

I'm speechless, my wife is speechless, my daughter is in tears!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

Moved, is she?

RI CHARD EVERETT:

Moved! Sick! How dare you let our poor little girl get on that stage and make such a fool out of herself?

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

What?

RI CHARD EVERETT:

We never pretended that she was the most talented girl around, but for you -- who should know better -- to let her get up and -- and -- (SPEECHLESS) I'm speechless! I'd sue you for malpractice if such a thing were possible!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

But -- but -- I did it for you! The money for the class!

RI CHARD EVERETT:

The money for the class! You can forget about that.

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

What??

RI CHARD EVERETT:

The only way I'd give you a penny for your class is if I had my brain replaced by a very small cauliflower! (STORMS OFF AS HIS PAGER BEEPS) I hope you're satisfied! (BEAT, AS HE GOES) I'm coming, I'm coming!

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

(CALLING) But, Mr. Everett! (TO WHIT AND SHAKESPEARE) I don't understand. His daughter was the star!

WHIT:

I hate to say "I told you so", Edwin, but ...

R.EDWIN BLACKGAARD:

What am I going to do? All these weeks of rehearsals and aggravation -- and we're right back where we started!

WHIT:

(COYLY) Well, Edwin ... that's show biz.

[MUSIC RISES AND TAKES US TO ... THE END.]